

January 16, 2008

The Honorable John T. Gallus, Chairman
New Hampshire Senate
Wildlife, Fish and Game and Agriculture Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 103
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

RE: SB 486 – An act relative to the duties and responsibilities of special deputy forest rangers

Dear Chairman Gallus and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of SB 486. The Department of Resources and Economic Development, Division of Forests and Lands, offers our full support for this legislation.

Special deputy forest rangers authorized under RSA 227-J:3 currently have the authority to enforce timber harvesting laws. The legislation would expand their authority of to include laws pertaining to forest fire protection and prevention (RSA 227-L), forest health laws (such as quarantines (RSA 227-K)) and the agency's administrative rules and other state laws for the protection of people and resources on DRED lands, such as State Forests, Parks, and Natural Areas. This authority would be congruent with the law enforcement authority of regular forest rangers

The legislation would allow our full-time Forest Rangers to focus on those laws that require a higher level of training, such as enforcement of timber harvesting laws, while still allowing us to fulfill our responsibilities to enforce laws and rules on Department lands, particularly those related to public use.

We have one request for amendment: to change the sentence after the revised text that currently reads "Such individuals shall have powers and duties exercised only at the discretion of the district forest ranger" to the following new language "Such individuals shall have powers and duties exercised only at the discretion of **the director**".

The Division is responsible by statute for the overall protection of forestlands throughout the state. We accomplish this primarily through 14 full-time Forest Rangers employed by the Division. In addition to their forest fire control responsibilities, the Forest Rangers enforce laws for timber harvesting, wetlands protection, timber tax, forest health, woodland fire prevention, and all laws for the protection of persons and property on lands owned by the Department. The Special Deputy Forest Rangers would serve to augment our existing staff.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this legislation. If we can provide any further information, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Philip A. Bryce
Director